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C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 001404

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SUBJECT: STILL NO DATE FOR DECISION ON KUWAITI WOMEN'S VOTING RIGHTS

REF: KUWAIT 1401

Classified By: CDA Matt Tueller for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (U) An expedited National Assembly vote on Kuwaiti women's voting rights may not happen before May. The recent grilling and subsequent proffered resignation of the Health Minister and other Cabinet changes (septel) have delayed a Parliamentary vote originally anticipated for April. Furthermore, the Interior and Defense Committee has yet to report on the draft legislation, a requisite step before a full Assembly vote. The only other option remains dissolving Parliament and promulgating women's suffrage by Amiri decree.

2. (C) Former Information Minister and current Advisor to the Prime Minister Muhammad Abdulhassan told the Ambassador April 5 that the GOK would prevail with women's suffrage but lacks two votes in the Parliament at present. He implied that the Prime Minister would convince Speaker Jassem Al-Khorafi -- who voted against women's voting rights in 1999 but now publicly supports them -- to cast a positive vote while reiterating that the PM does not want to travel to the U.S. in May without a positive resolution. Abdulhassan claimed the GOK has no interest in dissolving the Parliament.

3. (C) Women's rights activist Dr. Moudi Al-Humoud, however, told poloff April 6 that the Government may be losing resolve. She said that a pro-rights television commercial including testimonials from various activists, including Al-Humoud, has yet to air. When she contacted state-run Kuwait Television to inquire about the status, she was told that the Government ordered the delay of the commercial's broadcast. On a separate note, newspapers have run virtually no articles this week regarding women's voting rights for the first time since the Council of Ministers sparked the campaign on February 20.

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